

VZCZCXYZ0010
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBM #1421 2541606
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 111606Z SEP 06
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5141

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 001421

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/NCE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/10/2016
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [RO](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETING WITH FM UNGUREANU ON NAZI
DEPORTEES

Classified By: DCM Mark A. Taplin for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Ambassador met with Foreign Minister Ungureanu September 11 to discuss the return of Romanian-born Nazi war criminals Michael Negele and Johann Leprich. Ungureanu said that he had already prepared a response to the Secretary's letter of September 7 in which she urged Romania to accept the two individuals. Ambassador reiterated points in the Secretary's letter, and noted that he had discussed the

SIPDIS

matter as recently as last Friday with Interior Minister Blaga, who had indicated that an emergency decree might provide a way to solve the problem.

¶2. (C) Foreign Minister Ungureanu replied that, unfortunately, the Interior Minister had not been privy to discussions between the President and Prime Minister, where the two had agreed not to accept the two war criminals. Ungureanu gave a precis of the current Romanian law barring the repatriation of non-Romanian nationals involved in war crimes, and noted that these individuals were part of a group of ethnic Germans who had joined the German army and had subsequently accepted German citizenship. He said that both Romanian and German laws at that time did not allow for dual citizenship, and concluded that he doubted, therefore, that these two individuals were Romanian citizens at the time that they applied for U.S. citizenship.

¶3. (C) Ungureanu agreed with the Ambassador that the facts surrounding the naturalization of the two was in dispute, and said that the decision to not accept the two individuals was ultimately a "political" decision. On this point, he stated that there was ultimately no political will in the Romanian government to amend or suspend the current law. He noted that he had a "thick file" of thousands of angry letters protesting the decision of the previous government to accede to return in 2002 of another Nazi war criminal from the United States. At that time, he claimed, there were negative reactions not only from the general public, but also specifically from the Jewish community in Romania, who protested Romania's allowing the entrance of war criminals. He added that there had been a negative reaction from EU countries as well. He said that he could confirm the decision again with the President but he was certain that the answer would be negative. Ungureanu did not respond to a proposal from the Ambassador to have DOJ representatives come out to Bucharest to discuss the legal issues with the Romanian side.

¶4. (C) Comment: After months of inaction, the issue of accepting the former Nazi war criminals has finally received attention at the highest levels. According to Ungureanu both President Basescu and Prime Minister Tariceanu are unwilling to expend the political capital necessary to take a "political" decision to accept the two Nazis. Given recent

speculations about the possibility of snap elections soon after Romania's expected accession to the EU, may be that both are concerned about protecting their political flanks and loath to expose themselves to criticism on what could be an unpopular move, particularly among more nationalistic Romanians. We will try to confirm with other top Romanian officials later today and tomorrow what the FM told us, but it would appear the GOR has closed the door on accepting the Nazis. End Comment.
Taubman